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Chances of conspiracy refuted

By Alison Cross
DB Staff Writer

Terming conspiracy theorists who link the government with the Kennedy assassination "demonologists", Alfred Goldberg, Warren Commission historian, scoffed at possibilities of conspiracy at Friday's Security Studies Seminar here.

"Conspiracies are like elves," Goldberg said. "You have to believe in them to know they're there." Most speculation about the assassination, he said, has centered on the possibility of a right-wing conspiracy.

"A substantial number of people, however, especially in the South, still believe that the assassination was the result of an international Communist plot, but this is relected only in the polls," Goldberg said. The craving for sensationalism on the part of the public he said is overwhelming.

"Racist and reactionary at home, they (radical rightists) would also junk the detente with the Soviet Union, the test ban treaty, arms control and disarmament ideas and get on with the anti-Communist crusade at homw and abroad, Goldberg said, when the ant-Communist crusade has lost a good deal of steam both here and abroad, except, of course, for our venture in Vietnam."

A powerful reinforcement of conspiracy theories lies with the crisis of confidence in government and society, "manifestations of which have become so rampant and indiscriminant in the past few years, The Kennedy Assassination has become, for quite a few, a symbol of the credibility gap."

Goldberg described conspiracy theories as "varied, ingenious, imaginative and often fantastic." (One of the theories held is that the Mafia was probably responsible for the Kennedy assassination.)

"Every conspiracy theory must dispose of Oswald one way or another," Goldbery then said, shaking his head. He suggested four possibilities regarding Oswald: "Oswald was guilty and did it alone, Oswald was the victim of mistaken identity and was innocent, Oswald was innocent but framed by the police or Oswald was a member of a conspiracy and may or may not have participated in the shooting."

Lampooning the possible composition of a conspiracy group, Goldbery listed "Texas oil millionaires, anti-Castro Cuban groups, white racists, and a dissident CIA group." Why should Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy and Earl Warren protect them, he asked.

There is no physical evidence to consider that more than three bullets were fired, according to Goldberg, although observers claim to have heard either more or less than three shots. "The fragments added up to less than two bullets," he said.

"The basis for questioning the number of shots, the timing and reaction of the victims, he explained, is found in the films of the assassination, especially the Zapruder film."

The conspirators would have had to depend, among other things, on "Oswald's cheap $19.95 rifle, (that's with the scope; $12.45 without) as well as on the unstable Oswald as principal," Goldberg said.

"With each additional assassin and conspirator, the element of chance would have been all the greater—the loose ends, inconsistencies and contradictions."

Goldberg does not claim that the Warren Commission proved without a doubt that there was no conspiracy and that Oswald was the lone assassin, but he "believes it proved Oswald's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt."

"The finger of suspicion has also been pointed at the heir to the throne, Lyndon B. Johnson," he said, "who would be motivated by revenge for humiliations he received at the hands of the Kennedys." Goldberg attributes such charges to the "Hate Johnson" movement.

"The Commission itself has been accused of giving the public a political truth rather than the real truth, he said. "But this is one secret I believe would have been impossible to keep. It is perfectly possible, even probable, that the Commission did not discover a conspiracy because there was none!"